



## ASSESSMENT POLICY

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### Statement of intent

This Policy sets out how Atrium Studio School uses assessment, recording, reporting and monitoring to ensure students make the best possible progress and achieve the qualifications they need for professional careers in the Built Environment and elsewhere.

### Principles

Policy and practice in assessment at Atrium are designed to ensure that:

- assessment provides effective information for improving students' learning, formatively and summatively
- we draw on the strengths of different types of assessment (including standardised tests and employers' feedback) to reach comprehensive judgements on students' progress and achievements
- students' learning and progress can be tracked and evidenced, both in the short term and over a longer period of time
- assessment systems are effective, efficient and avoid duplicating data unnecessarily
- judgements are rigorous; they are standardised, validated and moderated so that they are accurate as possible and that staff benefit from the professional development that these processes generate
- all staff, including teachers from SDCC who teach Atrium students, are trained, supported and challenged to ensure we achieve whole-school practice and that students experience coherent approaches across subjects
- students are fully aware of how they being assessed, the purposes of assessment, what they need to do to improve and that they engage productively with staff, and each other, in assessment
- parents/carers receive honest and open information about their child's progress and are well-informed about how they can support them
- employers' assessments of work experience placements contribute meaningfully to students' learning and vocational development
- we draw effectively on what we know about students' knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes to take decisions, with them and their parents, about curricular options and the career pathways open to them

- students' progress and achievements are praised and displayed publicly, not only to encourage individual students but also to inform others of the standard expected
- assessment practice is flexible and responsive; it is informed by research, government requirements, and the monitoring and evaluation of this policy in practice.

## Implementation

Our intention is that students understand the purposes and practices of assessment, as it affects them, and that they can see how they might take responsibility for their learning and the progress they need to make. Through assessment, students should be fully aware of what they need to do to improve. We expect students to engage productively with all staff and with each other in assessment practices, at whatever level.

At classroom level, subject-specific learning product outcomes are expressed in terms of the Emerging, Developing, Secure and Mastery (EDSM) descriptors. These descriptors are used to monitor progress throughout a project or unit of work. Project overview sheets record the outcomes.

Teachers make students aware of the success criteria for a task, lesson or project which might be, for example, through a rubric that uses the EDSM descriptors.

Any or all of the progress indicators may be recorded using the EDSM scale on the school's SIMS mark sheets, along with any other progress data. This eliminates the need for staff to keep separate records and therefore reduces unnecessary workload. The information also provides senior leaders and personal learning coaches with detailed progress information.

Every two weeks, teachers allow time for feedback to students on their progress. Diagnostic comments identify areas of success and improvements that are needed. Students are required to respond.

At sixth form level, assessment takes account of the age of the students and the subjects studied.

## End of unit tests

Students undertake subject-specific, end-of-unit tests, including end of year (EoY) examinations, throughout Years 9, 10 and 11. Their purpose is to:

- capture summative information
- inform intervention (if needed)
- monitor the extent to which students are on track to achieve their grades in GCSE (and other qualifications)
- inform the SLT of any school actions needed, including CPD.

## Tracking progress and data capture

At subject level, students' targets and progress-related tracking comments are recorded on the inside front cover of all work books. These are, in some cases, customised to reflect subject-specific needs, but in all cases they show:

- end of Year (EoY) 11 targets
- revised targets (if appropriate)

- progress milestones and learning targets.

At school level, SIMS and 4Matrix are used to record, track, monitor and analyse assessment information. We aim to avoid duplicating data unnecessarily.

Data capture takes place at six points in the academic year, one of which comprises the End of Year assessments/examinations:

These data capture points have been chosen to ensure progress data are captured regularly. The dates also take account of teachers' workloads at particular times of the year, so that priority can be given to the quality of the data collection. The timings of parents' evenings and celebration events also inform the dates.

## **Personal coaches**

Personal coaching is provided for specific groups of students, such as some of the disadvantaged students, the most able and students who are under-performing. The personal coach works alongside the student to develop a personalised learning plan and to track their progress towards their qualifications and ambitions. Targets from coaching sessions are recorded on SIMS.

The coaching sessions have been shown to have a significant impact on helping individual students to meet and overcome some of the challenges they face, motivating them to reach their full potential.

## **Standardised tests**

In line with our assessment principles, we use a range of standardised tests in Years 9, 10 and 11, published by GL Assessment. We chose this publisher because of its extensive, high-level experience in providing research-based assessments, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. We can therefore benchmark our students' progress and performance against data standardised against UK student populations.

The standardised tests assess students in both academic and affective domains so that we gain a wide, holistic view. The tests we use currently are:

- Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)
- Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4)
- New Group Reading Test (NGRT)
- Single Word Spelling Test (SWST)
- Progress Tests in English (PTE)
- Progress Tests in mathematics (PTM)
- Progress Tests in science (PTS).

We use the GL Assessment dyslexia screening test for some students.

These standardised tests complement but do not replace teachers' judgements. They support us to:

- identify and record students' starting points swiftly and accurately: our students join Atrium in Year 9 from a range of different provision, including independent schools and home education
- identify precisely those students who appear to have particular learning needs so that we can provide a targeted curriculum (particularly through our Access and

Opportunity (A&O) programme)

- identify non-academic difficulties through the PASS test, such as any lack of confidence or motivation, that might contribute to students not fulfilling their potential
- track progress efficiently and accurately, especially in English and mathematics since these subjects are critical for students' progress across the curriculum
- triangulate other school data with the standardised test data to support moderation and test out the accuracy of teachers' judgements
- evaluate the impact of interventions and other strategies by allowing us easily to compare students' 'before' and 'after' data
- compare the progress of individual students across subjects and teaching groups, especially through the PTE, PTM and PTS tests
- provide evidence of progress for parents/carers
- identify areas for school improvement.

We administer all the tests in line with the publisher's protocols to ensure that the data are valid and reliable. This testing is incorporated into the wider school assessment processes, including the dates of the tests.

The digital format we have chosen for the test outcomes means that we can interrogate the data in a variety of ways for our different purposes, such as to:

- compare performance within a year group, across year groups and against a national benchmark
- track the progress of specific student groups, especially (but not solely) the disadvantaged students and the most able.

The digital format allows us to compare data intelligently, access narrative accounts of students' strengths and weaknesses, and reduce staff workload (because the online tests are marked automatically and test reports can be generated easily).

## **Work experience and the portfolio of evidence**

The portfolio of evidence forms part of the wider approach to assessment at Atrium and contributes to tracking students' vocational development.

Every student in Year 10 and Year 11 has an employer as a mentor. Together, they develop a professional portfolio of evidence that records each student's organisational, communication, enterprise and industry-specific skills and other learning. This is one way in which employers contribute formally to the assessment of students.

Developing the portfolio, including collecting the evidence for it, requires students to exercise the self-discipline they will need in the world of work and to reflect on their learning and progress. It complements other forms of assessment in which they are involved.

## **Celebrating success**

Students' progress and achievements are praised and displayed publicly. This is to encourage individuals and to inform other students (and parents) of the standard expected. Strategies include:

- Atrium Endeavour award (fortnightly, recorded in newsletter)

- parent sharing evenings
- workshop and competition successes
- project presentations to peers and industry links
- Celebration of Success – termly, including an end-of-year celebration event
- displays to show stages of work and finished products.

## Moderation

Assessment judgements are moderated within subjects, across South Dartmoor Academy and with other schools, particularly in collaboration with the Jurassic Coast schools. Employers are also involved in moderating DEC! Level 2 and Level 3, supporting the development of industry-ready professionals.

Subject leaders oversee moderation within their own subjects. Moderation windows are in the assessment calendar.

The outcomes of moderation meetings include:

- departmental discussions
- identifying need for subject-specific CPD
- support from the SLT.

When discrepancies from moderation are particularly marked, further work samples are moderated.

The Portfolio of Evidence is moderated at Atrium by an external Education Business Partnership link who provides feedback to the Assistant Principal (Industry Links).

## Monitoring and evaluation

Practice in assessment is monitored and evaluated. The Senior Leadership Team – and others as appropriate – monitors students' progress in lessons, as well as observing the quality of teaching, including assessment. Staff are observed throughout the year, in accordance with agreed policy, and receive oral and written feedback.

Other SLT monitoring and evaluation include:

- the scrutiny of SIMS and 4matrix data
- marking, teachers' feedback and students' responses in books; records are kept and feedback given to staff.

Formal inter-setting reviews across the academy trust also provide opportunities for the monitoring and evaluation of assessment practice.

The full governing body keeps assessment under review, especially through the governors' Teaching and Learning Project Team.

## Professional development

Professional development ensures that all staff, including administrative staff when necessary, are trained, supported and challenged in assessment practices. We aim to achieve well-founded, whole-school practices and to ensure that students encounter coherent approaches across their subjects and their work experience placements.

All Atrium, staff are briefed on assessment and progress at whole-school CPD events and have a copy of the assessment policy, assessment guidance and the calendar. Staff attend school meetings, briefings and other events to ensure they are familiar with the principles of the policy and what it looks like in practice.

Teachers are trained in how to use SIMS and 4Matrix to record, monitor and analyse student assessment information. They use this, alongside other formative assessment information, to inform their teaching and their progress discussions with students, parents and other staff.

The involvement of staff in internal and external moderation contributes to their professional development. The Senior Administrative Officer maintains a record of their attendance at external meetings.

The Principal, some staff and a governor have also received training from GL Assessment to support their interrogation and understanding of the standardised test data.

Employers are informed of assessment expectations in relation to the Portfolio of Evidence by the Assistant Principal (Industry Links) and Careers South West. This takes various forms, including shared assessment materials and Atrium-based employers' briefings.

## **Parents**

Ensuring parents/carers understand the way their child is assessed – and the purposes of such assessment – is important. We believe that if parents/carers receive honest and open information about their child's progress, they are better placed to support them. As part of this, we send home progress trackers so that parents are well-informed during the school year. An assessment calendar for parents is available through newsletters; year-group examination timetables are easily accessible via Atrium's website.

We also draw on what we know about students' knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes to make decisions, with students and their parents, about curricular options and the career pathways open to them.

Parents' meetings and other events, such as the Celebrations of Success, help us to engage with parents and the students about assessment and what it has told us.

## **Other policies and guidance**

This policy should be read in conjunction with other Atrium policies but particularly the policy for:

- Curriculum

Staff receive separate, detailed guidance on the implementation of this assessment policy, including the assessment calendar.